

Volunteer Organization Profile: Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans Minneapolis, MN

Volunteering in America 2011

Veterans returning from war can face multiple challenges as they transition to civilian life. Every night, there are more than 107,000 homeless veterans across the United States without a place to stay. Almost 1.5 million other veterans are considered at risk for homelessness due to poverty and lack of support.

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) and its volunteers work to provide statewide assistance and support to homeless veterans and their families. The organization helps these veterans to become productive members of society through a structured assistance program that acknowledges their specific needs. More than 12,000 veterans contact the organization every year.

In addition to these assistance programs, MACV hosts annual Stand Down events, modeled after a concept in the Vietnam War to provide a safe haven for troops returning from combat. These Stand Downs—which rely heavily on skills-based and other volunteers from around the community—offer homeless veterans food, a shower, a haircut, and other essential services, with attendance often exceeding 600 veterans.

Chuck Quigley has been volunteering with veterans since 1961, but began his work with MACV several years ago when a friend referred him to the organization. As a Korean War veteran, he believes that other veterans need to be taken care of. Chuck collects clothes from local dry cleaners and toiletries to bring to MACV for the veterans. He also volunteers at the Stand Down events and visits veterans recovering in the local hospital.

“I can’t ever imagine quitting,” said Chuck. “The veterans deeply appreciate what we do for them and it really has an effect on me. I can leave the hospital, but they can’t. I can go home to a warm house, they can’t. I really do get more than I give when volunteering.”

Founded in 1990, MACV works in partnership with other nonprofits and veterans organizations across the state to provide support to all Minnesota veterans. Services that are provided include employment assistance, housing, and legal assistance.

“I am always touched by the generosity of our volunteers,” said Kathleen Vitalis, MACV’s president and CEO. “The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans is dedicated to honoring the service of all veterans. Every community in this state has veterans in it and service personnel continue to deploy and continue to return home, beginning their journey of reintegration, and the challenges that entails. We couldn’t do this without the generous support of our partners and volunteers. “

For more information on the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans, visit their website at www.mac-v.org.

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs, and leads President Obama's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.